Put a Damper on Emotional Eating

Welcome to this second module of the course, where you'll discover proven strategies to help you cope with eating triggers, learn self-control techniques, and create a mindset to maintain a healthy weight moving forward into the future. The first trigger is a big one: emotional eating.

If you're an emotional eater, you're not alone. **Food is the most common means of dealing with negative feelings.** While the occasional bowl of ice cream won't cause any harm, many people take it too far. Unhealthy foods can cause a myriad of health issues when consumed in large quantities.

Negative eating also takes a toll on your self-esteem. Feeling out of control isn't empowering. You can regain that sense of control by eliminating emotional eating from your life.

Try these techniques to control emotional eating:

1. **Develop pleasures other than food.** Emotional eating is challenging to give up because it's so pleasurable. Food can make us feel much better, at least in the short-term. Scientists consider food as addicting as narcotics.

    - **The most effective way to give up a pleasurable habit is to find a substitute.** Determine a way you can soothe yourself without eating. You might listen to music, exercise, get a massage, take a bubble bath, or chat with a friend.

2. **Slow down.** If you have to eat, slow down. Focus on the taste and texture of each bite. You'll eat less and feel better about yourself afterwards.

3. **Learn your trigger points.** It might be coming home after a long, hard day. Or maybe you turn to food when you're bored or lonely. Recognize the situations that bring food into the picture. Develop a strategy for staying ahead of your urges. Carry healthy snacks so you're always prepared.

4. **Learn to accept feeling uncomfortable.** Rather than trying to make yourself feel better, examine your discomfort. What does it feel like? Where is it located? **If you can look at it dispassionately, it will begin to wane.**

    - Keep in mind that emotions are a collection of chemicals that result in physical sensations. We then label a particular set of body sensations as

anxiety, fear, loneliness, and so on.

5. **Be more aware.** Sometimes, especially when we're feeling emotional, it's easy to plop down in front of the television and devour a bag of chips before we even realize what's going on. If you're going to eat, then do nothing but eat. **Be mindful while you're eating and you'll eat less.**
    - Ask yourself, "Why am I eating this? Am I actually hungry?"
6. **Love your body. If you dislike your body, you're more likely to mistreat it by overeating.** It's almost impossible to make changes that affect your body in a positive way if you hate your body in the first place.
    - Think of all the amazing things your body can do. Your body is unique and awesome! Find a way to love it.
7. **Fill up on healthy food.** If you eat a healthy diet, it's difficult to eat enough to gain weight. Keep yourself comfortably full with healthy foods. If your stomach is full, eating is a less appetizing idea, even when you're dealing with emotions.
8. **Get sufficient sleep.** When we get tired, our mood suffers. Eating is also a response to a lack of energy. Willpower also suffers when we feel fatigued. Go to bed earlier.

Eating is an effective, but unhealthy, way to make ourselves feel better in the moment. **Stopping the cycle of emotional eating requires finding another way to deal with discomfort.** Emotional eating is a learned behavior. You can also learn to deal with life differently. Love yourself and make a commitment to gain control of your behavior.

In the next lesson, you'll discover how to cope with environmental triggers that cause you to eat more.

Here's what you need to do today:

- Do you use food to deal with negative feelings?
- What situation or feeling is your most common emotional trigger?
- Think of an activity that you enjoy other than eating.
- Make a plan to substitute this activity for eating the next time your trigger occurs.
- How will you remind yourself to follow through with your plan?